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ABSTRACT

Research in the areas of friendship selection, interracial acceptance, interracial contact, and interracial dating was reviewed to determine the nature of intergroup relations for White, Hispanic, and Black adolescents. The findings indicate that Black, White and Hispanic adolescents prefer same-race friends. When cross-race friendships occur in majority White settings they are generally initiated by minorities and rarely reciprocated by their White peers. Black and Hispanic females may have more difficulty with interracial acceptance than their male counterparts. Demographic, social, and personality variables may affect adolescents' interracial acceptance and interethnic approach behavior. Interracial contact is limited in desegregated schools because of within-school resegregation practices. Cooperative learning team strategies, however, have some potential for enhancing intergroup contact. Many college students express a desire to interracially date and do not rule out the possibility of interracial marriage. Males have more interracial dating experience, however, than females. (A six-page reference list concludes the document.) (Author/KH)

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The Status of Interethnic Contact and Ethnocentrism Among White, Hispanic and Black Students

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Abstract

This paper reviews research in the areas of friendship selection, interracial acceptance, interracial contact, and interracial dating to determine the nature of intergroup relations for white, Hispanic, and black adolescents. The findings indicate that black, white and Hispanic adolescents prefer same-race friends. When cross-race friendships occur in majority white settings they are generally initiated by minorities and rarely reciprocated by their white peers. Black and Hispanic females may have more difficulty with interracial acceptance than their male counterparts. Demographic, social, and personality variables may affect adolescents' interracial acceptance and interethnic approach behavior. Interracial contact is limited in desegregated schools because of within-school resegregation practices. Cooperative learning team strategies, however, have some potential for enhancing intergroup contact. Many college students express a desire to interracially date and do not rule out the possibility of interracial marriage. Males have more interracial dating experience, however, than females. The long term effects of these findings on the structural assimilation of minority adolescents are discussed.

The Status of Interethnic Contact and Ethnocentrism Among White, Hispanic and Black Students

The complexion of America is slowly changing its hue. It is projected that by the year 2030 one-third of the population of the United States will be composed of Blacks, Hispanics, and Asian Americans. Hispanics are one of the most rapidly increasing minority groups; the Hispanic population increased 61% from 1970 to 1980. The number of Mexican Americans, the largest subgroup of Hispanics (60%) increased by 93% during the same period. In 1980 blacks comprised 11.7% and Hispanics 6.4% of the U. S. population (Bureau of Census, 1982; Matney & Johnson, 1983). It is estimated that by the year 2000 the Hispanic population will double making them the largest ethnic minority group in America.

Any change in the ethnic structure of the United States will be accompanied by changes in ethnic relations. The increase in the minority population will certainly influence interracial contact and interethnic attitudes. Ethnic relations will be extremely important for children and adolescents because a large percentage of ethnic minority groups are under the age of 17 (i.e., 35% of the black population, 41% of the Hispanic population, in contrast to 27% of the white population). Thus, the most racially diverse age group is that of children and adolescents.

Historically, there have been numerous studies assessing the intergroup relations of black and white children and adolescents (Rosenfield & Stephans, 1981). A growing body of literature has attempted to assess Hispanic-White relations (Gerard & Miller, 1975). Less attention has been given to Hispanic-black intergroup relations although the nature of these interactions will greatly influence future race relations. The purpose of this paper is to survey the literature to determine the nature of intergroup relations for white, Hispanic and black adolescents. The paper reviews findings in the areas of friendship selection, interracial acceptance, interracial contact, and interracial dating.

Friendship Selection

Black, white, and Hispanic children of all ages prefer friends that are of the same race. The preference for same-race friends steadily increases from elementary to high school (Epstein, 1983). White students in predominantly white classrooms have more ethnocentric friendship choices than black or Hispanic students; in addition, white girls have a stronger preference for peers of the same race and sex, than the other race-gender groups (Gerard & Miller, 1975; Sagar, Schofield, & Snyder, 1983). White students have more minority friends when social class and achievement levels are equal (Rosenfield, Sheehan, Marcus, & Stephan, 1981).

Minority children in desegregated classrooms may have some difficulty finding peers who will reciprocate their friendship

choices. Based on the data of Hallinan (1982), in majority white classes black children made 70% cross-race choices but white children made only 15% cross-race choices. Thus, the friendship selections of black children were rarely reciprocated by white peers. Additional research supports this pattern (Ayers & Clark, 1985; Sagar et al., 1983). White children make more cross-race friendship choices when they are in predominantly black classrooms; in racially balanced classrooms more same-race choices are made (Hallinan, 1982). Longshore (1982) found a curvilinear relationship between cross-race friendliness and the racial composition of a school; white hostility toward black peers was greatest in schools with 40% to 60% black populations. He concluded that intergroup hostility is most frequent in schools where no racial group is perceived as being in control.

Peers are especially important for minority students because some teachers may be prejudiced and unsupportive. Teachers can influence student attitudes, behaviors, and classroom climate (Gumbiner, Knight, & Kagan, 1980). For example, Gerard, Jackson, and Conolley (1975) found that the more teachers underestimate the academic performance of their minority students, the fewer friendship choices these students received from their white peers.

The ethnic composition of minority adolescents' friends has been associated with college adjustment. For example, Graham, Baker and Wapner (1985) found that the best social and

personal-emotional adjustment to predominantly white colleges was made by black students who had mainly white friends in high school. Those students with mainly black friends in high school had the most difficult college adjustment and those with both black and white high school friends had moderate adjustment to college. Adjustment problems were reflected in the drop out rates which were 63%, 38%, and 20% for black students with black, black and white, and white high school friends, respectively. Other studies support this notion that prior interracial contact facilitates the assimilation of minorities into mainstream society and influences the nature of future friendship choices (see Braddock, 1985; Braddock, Crain, & McPartland, 1984).

Interracial Acceptance

Minority adolescents are often not accepted as equal status peers by their white classmates. The explanations for the lack of interracial acceptance in desegregated classrooms vary. The perception of cross-race aggression has commonly been identified as a barrier to interracial acceptance. Several studies have reported that desegregated whites viewed their black peers as aggressive (Schofield, 1981). These studies have rarely controlled for the differential social class levels of black and white students. Thus, the data can not be generalized to interactions between black and white students of similar social class levels.

A small body of previous research has suggested that black and Hispanic females have the most difficulty with interracial acceptance (Campbell & Yarrow, 1958; Dwyer, 1958; Gerard & Miller, 1975). A possible explanation for the gender difference is that participation in team sports provides informal equal status interaction and consequently increases interracial acceptance for boys. For example, Gerard and Miller (1975) found that minority boys (black and Hispanic) were often selected as play partners by white boys. In addition, Miracle (1981) demonstrated that involvement in cooperative teams enhanced the intergroup relations of black and white boys. Schools provide few opportunities for ethnically different girls to develop equal status relationships, especially when social class and academic performance differences exist.

Differential academic achievement of white and nonwhite students has been designated as the greatest deterrant to interracial acceptance. Some researchers suggested that black children's low classroom status resulted from their poor academic performance (Glidewell, Kantor, Smith, & Stringer, 1966; Pettigrew, 1969). Carter, Detine, Spero, and Benson (1975) found that although black junior high school students were found to select both black and white peers to satisfy their needs for achievement recognition (academic acceptance), white adolescents preferred white peers to fulfill this need. Sex and grade point

average, however, were better predictors of academic acceptance than race for blacks and whites. Most studies have confounded race and social class and have not considered the influence that teacher expectations have on academic performance and peer status.

The lack of interracial acceptance of minority students has also been associated with parental interracial contacts. It has been suggested that minority children who have parents experienced in interracial interactions are more readily accepted by their white peers than minority children whose parents live a more segregated existence (Miller & Gentry, 1980; Orive & Gerard, 1975).

The racial attitudes of parents and peers are often thought to influence interracial acceptance. Bullock (1977) found significant correlations between student racial attitudes and their perceived racial attitudes of parents, for both black and white adolescents. For black subjects, the correlation increased from the 8th to the 12th grade. The racial attitudes of white students were less correlated with their perceived parental attitudes as grade level increased. In spite of this decline, the white students' racial attitudes remained more similar to their perceived parental attitudes than the black students' racial attitudes. Consistent with this finding, Carlson and Iovini (1985) found greater similarity to the father's racial attitudes for white then black males. There was no relationship between the racial attitudes of the black males and their fathers. Finally,

perceived parental and peer racial attitudes were significant predictors of interethnic attitudes for white but not black or Hispanic adolescents (Jacobsen, 1977).

There is some evidence that demographic, social and personality variables influence adolescents' desire to approach students of different ethnic groups. Jacobsen (1977) studied variables that could predict the desire to make interracial contact for black, white, and Hispanic adolescents. The best predictors for black adolescents were their perception of good intergroup experiences and the perception of good teacher-student interactions. The most important predictors for white students were the perception of good teacher-student interactions, and good intergroup relations, sense of personal control, and the number of black friends; low anxiety, a sense of personal control, parental perception of integration, and positive self-concept were predictors for Hispanic students. Demographic variables (e.g., skin color, social class) were more important predictors for the Hispanic adolescents than the white and black adolescents. Light skinned Hispanics and those whose parents had high occupational status expressed a greater desire to approach their white peers than darker skinned Hispanics and those whose parents had low occupational status. The perceived parental and peer support for integration was related to the desire to make interracial contact for white and Hispanic adolescents.

Interracial Contact

Desegregation has placed together children with different social backgrounds and thus different values, attitudes, likes and dislikes (St. John, 1975). According to Allport (1954) contact between ethnic groups would reduce racial prejudice and promote interracial friendships if the contact were prolonged, between those of equal status, and sanctioned by those in authority roles. These conditions are rarely met in desegregated schools. Racial contact is not always prolonged because ability grouping within schools and classrooms results in an artificial separation by race. Eyler, Cook, and Ward (1983) noted that resegregation was the direct result of many practices and programs implemented by schools to manage diversity in students, such as academic tracking, compensatory education, special education, and bilingual education.

White and nonwhite students do not have similar social backgrounds; a disproportionate number of minorities are located in the lower social class. In addition, school teachers and principals have different expectancies and may practice differential treatment of minority and white students (Baron, Tom, & Cooper, 1985; Eyler et al., 1983; Grant, 1984, 1985; Schofield & Sagar, 1983). Rosenfield and Stephan (1981) added that interethnic contact should be informal to insure interracial acceptance, a requirement rarely met in desegregated schools.

Black and white students select to sit next to same-sex peers when voluntary seating arrangements are employed. Black students are twice as likely as white students to initiate interracial interaction (Sagar et al., 1983). When cross-race interactions occur between black and white students they are more task related than same-race interactions (Schofield & Francis, 1982); black and white students interact when necessary to complete assigned tasks. White children tend to dominate their interactions with black (Cohen & Roper, 1972; Riordan & Ruggiero, 1980) and Hispanic children (Robbins, cited in Schofield & Sagar, 1983). Asian students are more likely than black students to interact with their white peers (Dagenais & Marascuilo, 1981).

Patchen, Davidson, Hofmann, and Brown (1977) conducted a large scale study of factors influencing interracial behavior and attitudinal changes for high school students. Black and white students with positive cross-race attitudes reported more positive interracial contact than adolescents with negative attitudes. Negative interracial behavior resulted from aggressive behavioral patterns, prior racial attitudes, and the racial attitudes of family and peers. Students who were hostile toward their cross-race peers had negative interracial attitudes that were shared by their family and friends. In addition, these students showed a general pattern of hostile interactions with same-race peers. This finding is consistent with Schofield and Francis

(1982) who found that interracial interactions were no more negative than intraracial interactions. Positive interracial behavior depended upon prior positive interracial attitudes and the opportunity for cross-race interactions. White students who experienced positive interracial interactions in elementary school and had family and peers with positive attitudes, had more interracial interactions than the other students.

Black and white males interact more cross-racially than black and white females (Schofield & Francis, 1982). In some cases black females have been described as social isolates in desegregated classrooms, having less interactions with teachers and peers (DeVries & Edwards, 1974; Patchen, 1982; Schofield, 1982) and less social power (Cohen, Lockheed, & Lohman, 1976) than black males. Black girls may not begin their schooling with these patterns of interaction. Grant (1985) found that during the first grade black girls crossed race or gender lines more readily than the other race-gender groups, especially than black boys. The emerging social isolation of black girls would appear to be a function of their school socialization.

Cooperative learning teams have been used to increase the number of cross-race friendships in school settings for black, white and Hispanic students (Blaney, Stephan, Rosenfield, Aronson, & Sikes, 1977; Slavin, 1979; Weigel, Wiser, & Cook, 1975). Many studies have reported increased cross-race acceptance and

interaction as a result of cooperative learning teams (see reviews by Sharan, 1980; Slavin, 1980, 1983, 1985). These cooperative teams do not always result in greater cross-race friendships for all ethnic groups involved. The intergroup relations of white, black and Hispanic adolescents were assessed by Weigl et al. (1975). They compared classrooms using the whole-class method of instruction to classes using a small-group method, consisting of interracial teams of 4 to 6 students. Classes taught by the small-group method had less cross-race conflict and more cross-race helping than the traditional classrooms. Mexican-American peers were given more desirable ratings by white students in cooperative interracial teams than by whites in the traditional classrooms. The white ratings of black peers, however, were not increased by contact in the cooperative teams, nor were the black ratings of whites and Hispanics, or the Hispanic ratings of blacks and whites. Sharan (1980) cautioned that increases in interethnic relations as a result of cooperative learning teams may be unilateral with a positive change occurring only in the minority groups' attitude toward the majority group.

Interracial contact in desegregated schools may be influenced by the process of resegregation. Resegregation has been defined as the "separation of children by race or ethnicity within the walls of desegregated schools" (Eyler et al., 1983, p. 126). Eyler et al. identified five practices used by schools that

structurally limit interethnic contact: 1) Students are sorted into homogeneous ability groups which results in a disproportionate number of black and Hispanic adolescents in the low ability group; 2) Blacks and Hispanics are overrepresented in compensatory education programs and are pulled out of their regular classes for one-fourth of the school day; 3) Blacks are overrepresented in classes for the educable mentally retarded; 4) Hispanics are segregated in bilingual programs; 5) Hispanic and black students are suspended more frequently than whites which may be interpreted as schools "pushing out" minorities. In addition, racial segregation may occur in the selection of extracurricular activities. Many of these activities are either limited to (e.g., Honor socities) or attract (e.g., Student Council) students in the high ability groups (Karweit, 1982; Schofield & Sagar, 1982).

The interethnic attitudes of teachers and school staff influence the use of resegregation practices. Epstein (1985) found that teachers with positive attitudes toward integration used grouping patterns that promoted students interaction (e.g., active learning, equal-status programs), whereas teachers with negative attitudes toward integration were likely to use resegregative practices, such as tracking or ability grouping in class.

One factor identified from adult studies of interracial contact that may have some application for understanding the

interactions of Hispanic adolescents is the concept of simpatia. Triandis, Marin, Lasansky and Betancourt (1984) defined simpatia as a cultural script, that is, "a pattern of social interaction that is characteristic of a particular cultural group" (p. 1363). Hispanics were characterized as more likely than non-Hispanics to conform, share their feelings, act respectfully towards others and to "strive for harmony in interpersonal relationships." In addition, Hispanics are thought to stress avoiding conflict and instead passively endure stress. Triandis et al. suggested that Hispanics expect more positive and less negative social interactions than non-Hispanics. Interracial conflicts were thought to occur when non-Hispanics are insensitive to the cultural script of Hispanics.

The notion that Hispanics are characterized by simpatia is consistent with the findings that Hispanic children and adolescents are more cooperative and less competitive than their white counterparts (Kagan, 1984; Knight & Kagan, 1977). In addition, acculturation may influence Hispanic children's level of simpatia. For example, Kagan, Knight, and Martinez-Romero (1982) found that when asked about their reactions to situations that could provoke aggression, Mexican children were more likely than Mexican-American and Anglo children to indicate that they would avoid confrontation. These findings suggest that when adolescents from different ethnic backgrounds interact, they not only bring

ethnic stereotypes to the interaction, but also diverse expectations of appropriate social behaviors.

Different social expectations may result in poor interracial relations. With increases in minority interaction with whites, accurate expectations and judgment of white social behavior is enhanced. This would account for the better adjustment to white colleges of minority college students who had extensive contact with whites. In order for positive interracial contact to occur, however, white, black, and Hispanic adolescents must be aware of and sensitive to the preferred interaction styles of those different from their own ethnic group.

Interracial Dating

Interracial contact may increase the incidence of interracial dating. A large number of students on predominantly white campuses have experienced some form of interracial dating which has occurred more frequently for males than females (Clark, Windley, Jones, & Ellis, 1986; Lampe, 1981). Lampe (1982) found that 88% of black males, 92% of Hispanic males, and 58% of white males in his sample of college students reported interracially dating. In contrast, 28% of black females, 75% of Hispanic females, and 51% of white females dated interracially. Hispanics were involved in more interracial dating than black or white students. In addition, the Hispanic students dated more whites than blacks. Hispanic males, however, dated more black than white

females. White females dated more black males than Hispanic females dated. Many students who interracially dated had friends who also were involved in interethnic dating.

Although several previous studies have identified interracial sex as the motivating force behind interracial dating (Day, 1972; Sebald, 1974; Willie & Levy, 1972), Lampe (1982) found that the motives for interracial dating for black, white and Hispanic adolescents were the same as for intraracial dating. Very few students indicated that they interracially dated for sex. Whites indicated curiosity, or to prove a lack of prejudice as reasons for dating blacks more often than they did for dating Hispanics.

Lampe (1982) further explored the reasons against interethnic dating. Insufficient contact was the main impediment to white-Hispanic dating. Blacks gave lack of interest as a major reason for their lack of interracial dating. Concern about social acceptance (i.e., social pressure, parents and friends, feel it is wrong) was not a response frequently given but when it occurred it was given as a reason for why whites and Hispanics did not date blacks. Lampe noted that minority and majority adolescents were generally socially segregated from each other by living in different neighborhoods. This ethnic separation was perceived by Hispanics as a major barrier to interethnic dating, whereas for black students the separation was thought to result in a lack of interest in interethnic dating.

A number of students without interethnic dating experiences expressed a desire to date interracially (Lampe, 1981). Black, white, and Hispanic males are more willing to date and marry interracially than their female counterparts (Clark et al., 1986; Lampe, 1981; Stimson et al., 1979). Hispanic students were more likely to consider marrying a white than a black and white students were more interested in marrying Hispanics than blacks. Blacks were equally interested in marrying Hispanics and whites. Black females more than black males have expressed concern about peer acceptance of their interracial dating (Stimson et al., 1979). Although students are willing to interracially date, the majority prefer and date their own race, including those who interracially date.

Conclusions

School desegregation may be an essential element in the overall assimilation of minority groups into mainstream society. According to Braddock (1985) school desegregation leads to interethnic contact which is essential for minorities to achieve structural assimilation, that is "the process whereby minority groups gain entry into the social cliques, organizations, institutional activities, and general civic life of the majority society" (p. 10). Attending a desegregated school may have long term effects on the intergroup relations and future social mobility of minority children and adolescents. For example, black

students who attend majority white high schools are more likely to attend majority white colleges than black students who attend majority black high schools. Employees give preference to blacks from desegregated schools and thus job possibilities may be increased by attending desegregated schools. Black children and adolescents who attend desegregated schools are likely to work in desegregated settings, live in integrated neighborhoods, and have white social contacts as adults. In contrast, minorities who are educated in segregated settings, with no childhood contact with whites tend to avoid whites during adulthood (For review of these studies see Braddock, Crain, & McPartland, 1984). The message from these studies is clear, school desegregation can determine the degree to which the minority child will achieve social mobility as an adult.

Do white, Hispanic and black adolescents have an adequate amount of intergroup contact as a result of school desegregation? The findings from the studies reviewed in this paper would suggest not. Resegregation is common within desegregated schools and prevents the schools from reaching their full potential as pluralistic institutions. The findings indicate that although adolescents from diverse ethnic backgrounds do not generally act out aggressively toward each other as once expected, there is still a great deal of interethnic avoidance that occurs. The schools have failed to provide social climates where girls can

develop close relationships with those from different ethnic groups. They are only slightly more successful for boys because team sports encourage intergroup relations. Nevertheless, basketball and football are often viewed as "black sports" by white boys who may elect to join athletic teams outside of school instead of becoming involved with school teams (Schofield & Sagar, 1983).

The interactions that black and white adolescents have with their white peers are restricted and suffer from both the frequency and quality of contact. Interethnic relationships may be weak friendships instead of close reciprocal relationships thus their quality falls short of that found in racially homogeneous social networks. The success of quality interracial friendships may depend upon matching adolescents according to their social class and achievement levels.

The findings regarding interracial dating indicate that white and minority adolescents express an interest in having more involvement with cross-race members of the opposite sex. One potential problem is that black females appear to be less interested in interracial dating than girls of other ethnic groups and may also be perceived as undesirable partners by males of other races. The differential rates of interracial dating for black males and black females may have long term effects on the relationship between black males and black females.

What does the literature imply about the intergroup relations of black and Hispanic adolescents? The literature needed to answer this question is noticeably scarce and conclusive statements can not be made. Based on limited findings it appears that Hispanic and black students may prefer interacting with their white peers more than each other. This is an interesting pattern because as the proportion of minorities in the United States increases, their political power will also increase if they work together to assure that minorities can acquire structural assimilation. More information is needed on the frequency and quality of black-Hispanic interaction, especially with the predicted increases in the Hispanic population.

In conclusion, desegregated environments do provide more opportunities for intergroup contact, however, the conditions necessary to reduce prejudice and promote interracial friendships do not often exist. Although some would argue that by pure observation intergroup contact between the races has increased, these interracial interactions may be more prevalent among the middle class. Finally, there may be a growing minority underclass whose interethnic contact is minimal and whose social and economic outlook are dismal (Pinkney, 1984).

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